

FATHER MARK SCHULTE
HOMILY
BAPTISM OF THE LORD
JANUARY 11, 2026

“Born Again”

My Brothers and Sisters, Today’s Feast of the “Baptism of the Lord” marks the end of the Christmas Season. After this feast there is a relatively brief period of time called Ordinary Time and then the Season of Lent begins (Mt 3:13-17).

As we reflect upon the event of our Lord’s own Baptism in the Jordan River it gives us an opportunity to talk about the Sacrament of Baptism itself (CCC 1214-1284). The Gospel describes how John the Baptist was in the process of baptizing the people who came forward repenting of their sins. Suddenly Jesus appears before John seeking to be baptized. John is a bit confused that Jesus would do this because only sinners need to be baptized and John knows that Jesus is free of sin. Jesus tells John to give in for now and do this. Jesus emerges from the waters of Baptism and an epiphany occurs. The Trinity of God is made present in the Persons of Jesus the Messiah, the Voice of the Father, and the Holy Spirit in the presence of a dove above Jesus. Jesus would go on from there to begin His Mission telling everyone that they must be baptized if they wish to be saved.

Why is Baptism necessary for salvation? Baptism is the Sacrament that reunites a person back into the kingdom of God. All of humanity became separated from the kingdom of God as a result of Adam’s sin. Adam’s sin and indeed all sin must be atoned for now. Jesus who is both God and man came into the world to accomplish this atonement through His suffering and death. Those who wish to be saved must now put their faith in Jesus and His Gospel message. The Sacrament of Baptism is the ritual act signifying that a person has made this act of faith in Jesus.

Is Baptism actually essential for salvation? Jesus said that unless a person is born again by water and the Spirit, they cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven (CCC 1257). The Sacrament of Baptism is how this rebirth in the Spirit happens. Jesus said to His disciples, “Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”. Thus, the necessity of baptism is a direct command by Jesus to His Church. Must all people in the world be baptized in order to go to Heaven? Yes, this was Jesus’ command: “Go and teach all nations and baptize them.” It is the Mission of the Church to evangelize all people in the world and to bring them to faith in Jesus Christ and baptize them. This is a profound concept when you take time and give it some thought. For example all the people of China, Russia, Africa, India, Europe, South and North America and so on. Everyone must be baptized.

How much time has Jesus given to His Church to accomplish this? For two thousand years up until this point in time. But Jesus will return one day soon and then the opportunity to be baptized will be over.

When should a person be baptized? Children should be baptized as soon as possible after they are born. Babies must be born again like everyone else, and they should be baptized prior to any risk of death, which can happen to a young child.

When should an adult be baptized? As soon as they realize that salvation can only come through Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the word made flesh through whom the world was created. When He was baptized and His body touched the waters of the Jordan River, He sanctified all the waters of the world making water Holy for Baptism. We recall this during the Baptismal Ritual.

Each time we enter the Church, we bless ourselves with Holy Water reminding ourselves of our own baptism.

During a funeral Mass, the coffin is sprinkled with Holy Water as a sign that the deceased person was baptized into Jesus Christ.

Families should keep some Holy Water in their homes for parents to bless their children with.

Many people that we know, friends and relatives, are not baptized. We should be concerned for their salvation and discuss with them the importance of baptism. In doing so we are following the example of Jesus Christ who wishes all people to be saved.

One of the greatest crises in the world today is that people are dying without the benefit of being baptized and are thus missing out on eternal life in heaven. Be baptized and be reborn by water and the Holy Spirit, receiving the opportunity to share in eternal life with God.

NOTE: CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church